DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 279 736 UD 025 279

AUTHOR Dressler, Edith
TITLE Resettlement and Assimilation of Soviet Jewish Emigres into the American Jewish Community.
PUB DATE May 86
NOTE 62p.; Master's Thesis, Queens College, the City University of New York.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Master Theses (042) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Acculturation; *Adjustment (to Environment); Cultural Isolation; Culture Conflict; *Immigrants; *Jews; Refugees; Relocation; *Social Integration; *Subcultures
IDENTIFIERS *Russian Jews

ABSTRACT

Analysis of information on Soviet Jewish immigration to the United States reveals the following: (1) the strongest motivation for emigration was anti-semitism, followed by a desire to secure one's children's future, opposition to or dissatisfaction with the political and economic system, the desire to join one's family, and the belief that there is no solution to the Jewish problem in the Soviet Union; (2) the three types of Soviet Jews who emigrated were those living in the Western borderlands, those living in the Slavic "heartland," and those from Georgia and Central Asia; (3) the main difficulties they have encountered in the United States have been culture shock, finding suitable employment, lack of understanding about how the American democratic system works, difficulties in acquiring professional acceptance, and adjustment of young people to the academic and social demands of American high schools; (4) Soviet Jewish immigrants strongly and positively identify as Jews; and (5) as a whole, the Soviet immigrants are making a good adjustment. (PS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED279736

1-15-87

Resettlement and Assimilation of Soviet Jewish Emigres into the American Jewish Community

Edith Dressler

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Liberal Studies in the Graduate Division of Queens College, the City University of New York. May 30, 1986.

Approved by: R E Burd

Date: May 15, 1986

Approved by: Norton Levine
Director, MALS
May 29 1986

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Edith Dressler
Queens Coll. Lib.
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

UD025279

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

RESETTLEMENT AND ASSIMILATION OF SOVIET JEWISH EMIGRES INTO THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY

Some hundred years have passed since Konstantin Pobedonstsev, a leading policy maker of his time suggested as a solution to the Jewish question that a third of the Jews convert, a third emigrate, and a third perish. Predictions that the Jews in Russia will disappear have been made ever since.

V. Zaslavsky

It is difficult to find consistency in Soviet policy towards the Jews; it has been based to a large extent on expediency. ... sixty-eight years after the October Revolution, there still exists a "Jewish problem" in the USSR.

S. Levenberg

UD025279

CONTENTS

PART I. ARRIVAL

Introduction.....1

Profile of Soviet Jews and why they came.....3

Who they are and where they came from.....16

PART II. RESETTLEMENT

Definition.....19

Problems encountered in the U.S.....23

PART III. JEWISH IDENTITY

Integration into the American Jewish Community....33

Conclusion.....39

Appendix.....41

INTRODUCTION

The United States has once again become a magnet, drawing to its shores those whose native lands can no longer provide a secure protective environment conducive to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The Statue of Liberty, symbol of hope for countless thousands for the past one hundred years, is a beacon lighting the way for a new wave of immigrants yearning for economic and political freedom. Among these are the Soviet Jews, seeking a milieu in which they can live in peace without being singled out.

It is important, however, to point out that Soviet Jews do differ from the earlier Jewish migrant groups in some significant ways. They are much more self-reliant, resourceful, and determined than the "huddled masses" who arrived during the early part of the twentieth century. They are more energetic and highly motivated. Many are professionals. Their expectations are high and they are often outspoken when there is a lag in the realization of their dreams. Soviet Jews are accustomed to an ordered, structured, supportive society. Education, jobs, housing, health care -- all were provided for them. This afforded a sense of stability and security. In the United States, by contrast, they regularly encounter freedom of choice inherent in the

American way of life. Personal selection and decision making, therefore, have engendered anxiety and feelings of frustration among Soviet emigres.[1]

After analyzing a decade of emigration, it may be possible to answer the following questions: (1) Who are the Soviet Jews who emigrated and why did they leave? (2) What are some of the problems they have encountered in the United States? (3) In what ways has Soviet Jewish immigration affected the American Jewish Community?[2] It is also timely to ask (4) How successfully have the Soviet Jewish emigres to date been absorbed into American society economically and socially and with what groups have they identified? This report will address and attempt to answer these questions.

Profile of Soviet Jews and why they came

The Soviet Jew who chooses to emigrate does so for a variety of reasons. Unlike the earlier exodus from Russia, the impetus was not primarily economic. Maurice Friedberg summarized the reasons for the decision to leave as a "desire to live normal lives. By 'normal' they did not mean 'affluent.' Many of them are economically better off in Russia ... Nor did they necessarily mean 'security'. Physically, most of them would have been secure enough in the USSR, if they only would submit meekly to an atmosphere of cultural genocide coupled with a rather strong discrimination in education and employment."[3]

Soviet progaganda sometimes uses the terms "Zionist and "Jews" interchangeably, making them synonomous in the public mind. Since the mid-1960s the Zionists (Jews), reminiscent of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, have been accused of a plot to undermine communism and take control of the world and that, together with British and American imperialists, have been responsible for financing and constructing a war machine for this purpose.[4] As several sociologists have pointed out,

> The existence of this fantastic image of a powerful and dangerous Jewish bogey, sharpened by a resurgent Russian nationalism, renders nonsensical all official claims to the effect that there is no Jewish problem in the USSR. For despite the considerable socio-economic advances registered by Soviet Jews since 1917, they remain in a marginal, vulnerable and deteriorating position in Soviet society.[5]

Zionism, therefore, became a good excuse for the Soviets to exclude Jews from important positions in the government, the party, and the diplomatic corps. Inherent in this reasoning is the view that with the existence of Israel there was potential for new loyalties and, in 1968, there was a marked decline in the number of Jews permitted to enter institutions of higher learning. Therefore, concern over their children's prospects for receiving a good education and a career motivated many Soviet Jews to emigrate.[6]

Officially, the Soviet system distinguished between Russians and Jews, as it did among other nationalities. "Jews are derisively called pyaty punkty, 'fifth pointers,' because national identity is point no. 5 in the passport."[7] Jews in the Soviet Union were conflicted. As one Jewish scientist expressed it: "The best time of our lives was during the War because at that time we all felt closer to our government than at any other time in our lives. It was our country we were defending, our war effort." And as another stated: "Nationalism, the worship of the Motherland, has become a substitute for all other forms of belief."[8]

Elie Wiesel observed that on a visit to Moscow he found young Jews seeking "to return to Judaism," but without knowing what it is. Without knowing why they define themselves as Jews . . . (believing) in the

eternity of the Jewish people without the slightest notion of . . . the meaning of its mission." "We are Jews," one youth told Wiesel, "for spite." And they demanded the right to leave.[9]

The Soviets termed this continuing flight the "third emigration." The first was "sociological" in nature, when 8,000,000 Jews fled tsarist pogroms at the turn of the century. The second was considered "political," when a million Russians, members of the upper classes, as well as peasants, Jewish and non-Jewish, left after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. The third wave (excluding displaced persons who chose not to return to the Soviet Union after World War II) was given impetus in 1973 when Attorney General Mitchell granted Soviets "parole" status reserved for persons being given refuge from persecution in their homeland. The third wave is generally described as "personal" or "emotional." Many left because they thought that if they did not, there would never be another opportunity.[10]

Hedrick Smith points out that Soviet Jews were allowed to emigrate "as an exception" to the normal Soviet restrictions on travel and emigration, but that did not mean this right was granted permanently to them or that the over one hundred Soviet nationalities shared this privilege. Whenever the authorities have a

difficult problem to deal with, he observed, they make concessions, but they do not like to change the rules.[11]

Ironically, Jews were envied by other ethnic groups who sometimes married Jews or pretended to be Jewish in order to get permission to leave the country. Smith found that Jewish activists were fond of telling the joke about Abramovitch who had applied for an exit visa. When interrogated by an official in the Office of Visas and Registration as to why he wanted to leave the country when he had a good position as a college professor, a car, an apartment, and a good life, he replied that it was not he, but his relatives who wanted to leave. "You see," he explained, "I'm the only Jew in the family."[12]

Zaslavsky and Brym acknowledge that despite the policy of official anti-semitism, the Jews have "displayed a remarkable degree of upward social mobility" in the USSR. "Indeed, it is entirely an open question," they state, whether the Jews' rate of upward mobility in the USA - the 'land of golden opportunity" - has been at all higher." They explain this "phenomenon" by the fact that after the Bolshevik Revolution there was a great need for qualified people who fled or were expelled from the USSR, killed, or excluded from bureaucratic and professional positions because they were deemed

"untrustworthy." The Jews were characterized as a "mobilised diaspora," a group performing specially important functions in the transition to an industrial society.[13] (See Table 1 in the Appendix).

Though the Jews had suffered political, economic, social, and educational discrimination under the Russian Tsars, they were nonetheless permitted, within the Pale of Jewish Settlement to practice their religion and engage in creative literary activity in Hebrew and Yiddish, creating a "golden age of Jewish cultural creativity." However, with the advent of the Soviet regime, Jewish religion and culture have been systematically destroyed.[14] With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Stalin launched his campaign against "rootless cosmopolitans" -- the Jews. The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 was yet another pretext for purging Jewish intellectuals, doctors, and scientists in liberal cultural and scientific circles.[15]

When the Jewish Autonomous Region of Birobidzhan was established in the 1930's, it offered a cultural outlet for the Jews of the region. There were schools in which Yiddish was the language of instruction and Yiddish was an official language in addition to Russian. Jews served prominently in the local Party and Soviet government bodies. Some Jewish intellectuals moved to Birobidzhan, Yiddish periodicals were published,

as well as a Yiddish-language newspaper, the Birobidzhaner Shtern. There was even a library named after the Yiddish humorist, Sholem Aleichem, with a collection of works in Yiddish about the Jewish people and their cultural heritage.[16] Birobidzhan as a Jewish settlement proved to be only symbolic. As one sociologist pointed out:

> The first seeds of this failure were already sown by the very selection of this site for Jewish settlement. The remoteness of Birobidzhan from the existing centres of Jewish life; the difficult climatic conditions of a desolate land; and the security dangers that loomed over the area for a lengthy period certainly had an adverse effect on the project. Then, the concentration of the Jewish population in the Western USSR, where there were rapidly expanding economic possibilities for the individual and a highly developed cultural infrastructure (albeit primarily in Russian), deflected many Jews from volunteering to transfer to Birobidzhan.[17]

In 1948-49 the Yiddish theatre, the Jewish publishing house, the periodical Birobidzhan, the library and Jewish research institutions, and schools were all closed down. Jewish writers were "purged" and, in the early 1950s, the region became the area of penal exile where Jews were sent to do forced labor. After Stalin's death the veil of secrecy was lifted somewhat. Reports on Birobidzhan began to appear in the Soviet Union emphasizing the Jewish nature of the region. On the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Jewish Autonomous Region, for example, a special collection in Yiddish and Russian devoted entirely

to the region was published. However, in 1959, about 14,269 Jews, constituting 8.8% of the region's overall population (and only 0.7% of the entire Jewish population of the USSR), lived in the region. According to the 1970 census, the Jewish population of Birobidzhan decreased to 11,452, 6.6% of the total population of the area. In reality, therefore, it may be said that Birobidzhan was merely a device to divert the attention of Soviet Jewry away from Zionism and Israel and a means of proving to the world that the "Jewish problem" had found a solution within the Soviet Union.[18]

There remain two Yiddish-language publications in the USSR - a monthly journal called Sovietish Heymland (Soviet Homeland), published in Moscow, and a newspaper, Birobidzhaner Shtern, published five times per week in Birobidzhan, and one barely active Yiddish theatre group, officially launched in Birobidzhan in 1978, but generally on the road wherever Jews live in the USSR. In an interview with William Mandel, Yuri Sherling, Director of the resurrected Yiddish musical theatre, explained: "Today the term Yiddish culture is legitimate. After all, from the 13th century on, whether we like it or not, it has come into being consequent upon the migration of the Jews to Western Europe. ... (it) gave us Sholom Aleichem, Nobel Prize winner, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Mendele Mokher Sforim, and Isaac Leibush Peretz, a whole literature,

music." In 1949, when he was born, there were no yeshivas or Jewish schools of any kind in the Soviet Union. He learned the Yiddish language by enlisting the aid of older residents who knew the language. "For all practical purposes," he stated, "I resurrected something that was dead ..."[19]

Some sociologists believe that renewed Jewish cultural activity since the 1950s - Yiddish concerts, amateur performing groups, the Yiddish journal and the publication of books in Yiddish - strengthened Jewish ethnic consciousness in the Soviet Union, even among the young, who generally knew little Yiddish, as stated above.[20]

Joshua Rothenberg indicates that the Soviet regime feared Jewish nationalism more than it feared the Jewish religion. As stated to Joseph Schechtman, Jewish-American journalist in the editorial offices of Pravda:

> ...if we sometimes close Jewish houses of prayer it is not because we are aiming at the synagogues as religious strongholds--they are of themselves of no consequence. But they serve as the last assembly for our Jews, often even for those who are no longer religious. They help to maintain cohesion, to nurture the feeling of belonging to a distinctive Jewish entity. And this is what we are trying to prevent. The fewer synagogues, the fewer opportunities to congregate and to keep Jewish separateness.[21]

Rothenberg points out that the absence of a central Jewish religious organization renders each synagogue a separate unit isolated from all others in the country, unlike other religious groups. The central synagogue in Moscow, however, because of its location sometimes requires the de facto status of a representative body. The average age of Jewish clergymen is over 70 and there is little likelihood that they will be succeeded by the younger generation, as there are no institutions of religious training in the Soviet Union.[22]

Sociologists such as Victor Zaslavsky and Robert Brym make a definite distinction between "extrinsic" and "intrinsic" reasons for Soviet emigration patterns. While they acknowledge that outside factors, such as the establishment of the State of Israel and the quality of United States-Soviet relations, do affect the Soviet government's emigration policies, it is primarily internal matters that determine the overall policy.

In the years following the Russian Revolution, Jews were relatively highly urbanized, educated, and loyal to the new regime. Consequently, they were a comparatively favored group. According to Brym, even as late as 1970, their advantaged socio-economic position was

evident from figures on educational attainment. For example, although less than one per cent of the USSR's population was Jewish in 1970, Jews represented nearly two per cent of all university students, nearly nine per cent of all scientists, fourteen per cent of those holding the rank of doctor, and over seventeen per cent of doctors of science in Moscow.[23]

However, under Stalin's regime, as the state became more centralized, Jews were replaced by upwardly mobile members of other national groups. As a result, quotas were instituted in the universities. "An antisemitism of convenience spread among Russians and other Soviet intellectuals, who increasingly came to see the numerous Jews in professional and administrative classes as the major impediment to the advancement of their careers."[24] Pinkus acknowledges that while it is difficult to pinpoint the precise reason for an individual's emigration, available information indicates that the strongest motivation for emigration whether the destination was Israel or the United States was anti-semitism, both official and "popular."[25] Other cogent reasons cited were the desire to secure one's children's future; opposition to or dissatisfaction with the political and economic system; the desire to join one's family who have already emigrated; and the belief that there is no solution to the Jewish problem

or to the individual Jew's problem in the Soviet Union insofar as no change in the regime or its policies is likely.[26]

Benjamin Pinkus identifies four categories of Jewish emigrants from the Soviet Union: those who go to Israel and remain there (olim, the process of aliya); those who go to Israel, then leave (yordim, the process of yerida); those who leave the Soviet Union on the basis of an exit visa for Israel, but go directly to another country; (noshrim, the process of neshira "dropping out"); and those few who receive exit visas for other countries. He points out that the destination is determined by three sets of factors, i.e., the emigrant's general and Jewish characteristics; the perceived attractiveness of a country of destination; and the perceived negative characteristics of a country of destination. Younger and better-educated Jewish emigrants prefer the West to Israel in the belief that they are more likely to succeed in the West's competitive system. The assistance given by the American Jewish Community and its volunteer organizations makes life easier and assures a better adjustment to their new environment. Israel holds more attraction for those who see themselves as being in exile and who wish to build a new life in their own land.[27]

By 1973 a growing number of Russian Jewish immigrants came to the United States. By 1980, the number reached 75,000, of whom 30,000 came to New York City.[28] This transition from aliya resulted primarily from several factors: (a) the negative impact of the Yom Kippur War in Israel; (b) difficulties of life, e.g., the climate, fear of war, the economy, fear for Israel's future; and (c) as stated, aid from Jewish institutions for Soviet Jews going to the West.[29] Thus, Soviet Jewish immigration to Israel peaked in 1973, with 33,477 arrivals. In the two years following the Yom Kippur War this number was reduced to 16,816; to 8,531 in 1975; or a 75 per cent decrease from the 1973 figure.[30]

Although some feared that if growing numbers of Soviet Jews decided to go to the United States the USSR would close its door to all Jewish emigration, this was not the case. According to an article by Avraham Tirosh which appeared in the Israeli press, the Soviet Union's attitude on the question of the "drop outs" has changed:

> A short time ago there was even an announcement that the Arabs received a promise from the Soviets 'to channelize the departure of Jews to the West.' The calculation is simple: if the Soviets will be forced to let go of 60 thousand Jews a year according to Jackson's amendment, then the more of them go to the West the less will the Soviets be accused of strengthening Israel and the less Israel will have a claim on the aliyah from Russia. There is no doubt also that the Soviets have cracked the 'secret' of neshira.[31]

In the words of one New York Times correspondent, "Soviet concern has never seemed to focus on whether the emigres actually ended up in Israel"; the concern is merely to get rid of Jews perceived as no longer useful, especially if they are dissidents.[32] As Edelman points out, "the Soviet authorities themselves were using visas to Israel to get rid of 'undesirables.' including non-Jews like Andrei Amalrik, author of Will the Soviet Union Survive to 1984?, whom they forced into exile in the West. There are other contradictions and shifts in Soviet policy toward Jews, as demonstrated by the fluctuating numbers permitted to emigrate, all indicating that the Russians apparently need no 'excuse' for whatever they may decide to do."[33] As Z. Nezer pointed out, in 1980, came the first indication that Moscow had decided to make an issue of the "dropouts." He believes that there is a correlation between the number of dropouts and the scale of reduction in exit visas issued in certain republics and cities. He also indicated that the Soviets might use the neshira for propaganda purposes, in order to offer an explanation for the drastic cut in Jewish emigration which had peaked in 1979 and declined since. However, the dominant pattern is one of a very steep decline in emigration in general from the USSR.[34]

Who they are and where they came from

The Soviet Jews assisted by HIAS came from communities in 14 of the Soviet Union's 15 republics (see Table 2 in Appendix).[35]

Zvi Gitelman identifies three broad types of Soviet Jews: (a) those living in the Western borderlands and hence known as Zapadniki, or "Westerners") of the USSR: the Baltic republics, West Ukraine, and Moldavia; (b) those living in the Slavic "heartland"--the RSFSR (Russia), the Ukraine, and Belorussia; (c) Georgian Jews, "Mountain Jews," and Central Asian, or Bokharan Jews. The "Westerners" are more attached to Jewish identity and culture than "heartlanders," as the former came under Soviet rule relatively recently from states where Jewish religion and cultural life flourished right up to the outbreak of World War II. Aliyah in the 1960s started among them, especially in the Baltic capitals of Riga and Vilnius and approximately one-fourth of the Soviet immigration to Israel comes from the Baltic republics, although only about three per cent of the Jews resided there. By contrast, the "heartlanders" are the furthest removed from Jewish tradition and culture. Many are third and even fourth generation Soviet citizens having, for the most part, lost their Jewish culture. Though they constitute 80 per cent of the Soviet Jewish population,

they have contributed only about 14 per cent of the emigration to Israel. They are impelled by political alienation, economic motivations, and a desire to escape restrictions on Jews to emigrate to the United States and Canada.[36]

The Asian Jews are less educated than the Europeans, but more community conscious and family oriented. Motivated mainly by traditional Jewish values they have emigrated largely to Israel where they are more easily absorbed than in the United States. Gitelman points out that the geo-cultural differences among Soviet Jews are relevant to immigrant resettlement because these variations would impact on the types of assistance that would be required. For example, different cultures produce different employment and housing patterns and needs. European Jews have small families, for the most part, while Asian and Georgian Jews have large, extended families, requiring correspondingly larger living areas.[37]

According to an official of the Hebrew Immigrant Society (HIAS), most of the arrivals in the United States were young and possessed a high degree of secular education; about one-half were highly trained and/or university graduates. There were twice as many women as men in the

professional category:

	Women	Men
Medicine	74%	26%
Humanities	83%	17%
Social Sciences	71%	29%

However, in the arts, entertainment, and in the sciences, the proportion of men exceeded that of women, although women predominated in the white collar and men, in the blue collar categories.[38]

Part II. RESETTLEMENT

I am here now. I feel very far away from Russia. I have a very good job, a good salary. I am Jewish. I know Yiddishkeit. I am not afraid that this will keep me back. I am in America, in New York, and it is good, it is good for the important things.

quote in Today's Immigrants

According to one social scientist resettlement may be defined as the process of finding a new home, obtaining employment, and developing the ability to function in a new society while retaining a sense of appreciation and pride for one's cultural heritage.[39]

While the immigrants are still in Rome plans were made for their reception in the United States. Basically, there are four key groups of resettlement practitioners: the United States government, traditional voluntary resettlement agencies, State and local governments, and refugee self-help or mutual assistance groups. The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) staff works closely with various government officials, as well as with the Joint Distribution Committee which, with assistance from the United States Refugee Program, arranges for maintenance. ORT (Organization for Rehabilitation through Training) conducts English and some vocational classes for emigres; other organizations cooperate with HIAS to provide a broad range of services while processing them for visas, which usually takes between three and four months.[40]

The selection of an appropriate American community involves the participation of a number of agencies: the Premigration and Community Service departments in HIAS

world headquarters in New York, local family agencies or federations, who contact relatives or others interested in the resettlement of the immigrant families. Important considerations are the Jewish population of the community, the ability of the community to absorb anticipated numbers of immigrants, the presence of schools, employment potential, and medical facilities.[41]

In New York City, where about half of the total HIAS-assisted arrivals in the United States live, the New York Association for New Americans (NYANA) has undertaken the task of providing the essential services, primarily with the help of various agencies of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies. Referrals are made to settlement houses, such as the Young Men's & Young Women's Hebrew Association (Y's), for social and cultural contacts, Federation of Employment and Guidance Services (FEGS) for help in job counseling and training, the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services to the Aged (JASA), which helps the elderly adjust to their new surroundings. JASA workers provide outreach to elderly Soviet Jews in several of the community centers. This is a vital service, as about twenty-five per cent of the Soviet immigrants are now over the age of fifty and some of the grandparents who emigrated with their

families are actually in their seventies and eighties. Adjustment for the older age group is particularly difficult as language learning is much slower and often is not achieved at all.[42]

As a spokesman for NYANA observed: "For newly arrived refugees trying to make their way in New York, ability to communicate in English is primary for survival and successful integration." To help them achieve this competence as soon as possible, NYANA's English Language Services provides intensive classroom instruction in ESL (English as a Second Language) three hours a day five days a week for about three months. There is also a new language laboratory featuring an audio cassette player-recorder as well as a video monitor acquired through a grant from the Jewish Communal Fund of New York. Students are provided with Walkman-type stereo cassette players so that they may listen to English radio programs at home and play learning tapes of various kinds prepared at the NYANA recording studio.[43]

Local community agencies have been particularly helpful and supportive in the educational and acculturization process. Prominent among these is the Service Center for Russian Immigrants located in Forest Hills, Queens. During a recent visit to the Center, I inter-

viewed the founder of the Center, Esther Grunblatt, wife of Rabbi Joseph Grunblatt of the Queens Jewish Center of Forest Hills, and other members of her staff. She explained that the program's major orientation is to ease the transition on a local level of Russian immigrants into full participation into American life. The approach is basically two-pronged: two days a week are spent at language learning, at Junior H.S. 157, in Forest Hills, under the aegis of Education Director, Faye Reichwald; and a day drop-in center at the Central Queens "Y" to handle immediate concerns, such as Medicaid card requests, tenant problems, job needs, translation of documents, help with filling out necessary application forms, and counseling. As a result of their efforts, over 3,300 Russian families have been served. After the HIAS brought the Russian people to New York City and NYANA provided the essential services, there remained a vacuum to be filled - a need for day-to-day contact and assistance. During my visit to the Center, a frail, elderly woman arrived. I was told that she was living alone in this country waiting for the arrival of her family from the USSR. She receives reassurance and friendship from the staff to help her survive the lonely and anxious wait until the Soviet government reunites her with her son and his family. Along with basic needs, local

community organizations and centers can fill the void and act as surrogates for the family and familiar surroundings left behind.

Problems encountered in the United States

According to Mrs. Grunblatt, one of the major problems to be overcome at the outset is culture shock. Although the Soviet Jews share experiences in common, rates of adjustment depend upon the age of the individual. Ironically, while in Russia, they shared feelings of alienation because of their Jewish heritage; in the United States they are often set apart because they are Russian immigrants. The older population are more resigned, as their expectations were lower to begin with; the young people and children are resilient and can adapt after a short time. The middle-aged group is encountering the most difficulty, particularly vocationally and economically, as these people must bear the burden of supporting the family. Finding suitable employment, therefore, is another major hurdle to be overcome before a successful adjustment to their new lives can be made.

Among the entitlements available to all immigrants entering the country is that of government-sponsored job training through the Job Training Partnership Act

Program (JTPA) through which NYANA helps refugees learn employable skills and matches the client to job opportunities, although these are generally clerical or blue collar jobs.[44]

As Zvi Gitelman points out, Soviet immigrants are not a homogeneous group. Therefore, caseworkers must be able to distinguish between the Moscow intellectual and the Georgian worker when determining the type of assistance each requires. In addition, they must be aware of cultural and behavioral differences: "Soviet immigrants may demand and shout, rather than request, but this is normal, accepted, and even expected behavior for those coming from a culture where the relationship between official and citizen, between salesperson and buyer, is automatically assumed to be an adversary one. ... The assumption that those with whom they deal are powerless clerks is transferred to the United States, so the frequent demands to 'see your superior, the nachal'nik should not come as a surprise."[45]

Although in the United States immigrant absorption is primarily a non-governmental function, for many immigrants the relationship with the volunteer agencies is not a comfortable one. The relationship at the outset is basically one of dependence, especially demeaning for those who had a relatively high status in Soviet life.

As stated above, the immigrant transfers Soviet ways of dealing with bureaucracies and bureaucrats and their confrontationist style often tends to alienate the American social worker. Therefore, mutual distrust and misunderstanding sometimes develop between client and caseworker.[46]

Nina Dorf, a caseworker in the Chicago Jewish Family and Community Service, found, for example, that the thought of getting help by talking over a problem is a strange concept to most Soviets; out-patient psychiatric programs have only recently been started in large Soviet cities. The Russians were hesitant about talking about themselves as they were fearful of just how the information would be used. In the Soviet Union talk could be dangerous. It was important, therefore, to involve the immigrants in the decision-making process because "an increasing ability to take responsibility and sort through decisions is an indication of a family's beginning adaptation to American life."[47] The professionals found that the problems of dislocation and disorientation were two-sided. As another worker observed, "It is not simply a question of telling the emigres how they ought to behave; we must also find out from them why such conformity is difficult."[48]

Professionals working with Soviet emigres agree that a basic problem is their lack of understanding of how our democratic system works. As an official of HIAS observed, "the 'unknowns' to the Soviet Jews are: stress on independence and individualism; a free and competitive job market; the role of religious institutions; the role of the voluntary agency, health care; job advancement and opportunities; freedom of movement from place to place, and the differing role of government in our daily lives."[49]

Nora Levin found that the most profound source of distress of Soviet immigrants is their inability to find work quickly. "In the USSR no one is unemployed and no one ever has to search hard for a job. Work is provided by the state and one often remains in the same job for life." Professionally trained people, such as doctors, dentists, and nurses, who arrive with no understanding of U. S. examination and licensing requirements are particularly subject to frustration in their attempts to find positions comparable to those held in the USSR. They must learn the English language in order to pass the necessary licensing examinations to reenter their respective professions. Moreover, job descriptions in the USSR have little relevance to the United States, as Soviet citizens

are often trained for restricted skills instead of the broader work common in the United States.[50]

To ease the transition, NYANA has instituted a two-year program of aid to emigre physicians in the health professions. Acknowledging that this is a poor substitute, one NYANA counselor recommends, however, that the physicians take advantage of the program while continuing to seek residency so that they may seek employment in allied fields such as Physical Therapy, Diagnostic Ultra-Sound technology, Respiration Therapy, as well as Medical Records and Occupational Therapy.[51]

Another difficulty confronting Soviet scientists and physicians is the fact that even the most highly educated Soviet emigre may lack familiarity with diversity. Scholars in the USSR need special permission, not always granted, to read non-Soviet materials in their field. Therefore, physicians may be unaware of advances in medicine made in the West since the end of World War II. However, some emigres feel that the difficulties of life encountered in the United States are offset by the advantages of freedom.[52]

Soviet emigre painters, too, have encountered difficulties in finding acceptance within the close-knit artistic community. Sociologist Marilyn Reueschemeyer,

who conducted a study, interviewing both artists and gallery owners, found that some gallery owners would not consider work that did not conform to international avant-garde art; others would not look at the work of artists who did not come recommended. Although many artists did participate in group shows that traveled to Jewish communities throughout the country and were well received, they did not view these exhibits as entry into the real world of art. As one emigre stated:

> At first I was excited by America. I liked it but they didn't like me. All doors are closed. I have no gallery. ... Here there's freedom. Freedom has two sides. Here artists paint for money, not spiritual ideals. Buy me -- I'll do what you want. ...

Another artist observed that the only business of the artist is art, that they are obsessed with the notion of becoming American artists; at the same time they recognize that they are different and remain Russian artists in a strange land. Despite the rejection of art as propaganda, however, most emigres believe that art has to be more than an end in itself. Therefore, these artists are truly conflicted. As one art collector commented:

> Russian artists are always serving an ideology. ... They say they should be allowed to paint what they want but the reasons for painting have another ideological context. ... The technical skills of the Americans are excellent

> but Russian art is more emotional and reveals a greater spirituality.

The artists, in spite of these cultural differences, are hopeful that eventually they will be successful enough to work as full-time artists and that they will be appreciated by their American colleagues and by an American audience.[53]

Many Soviet emigres opened their own businesses because they were unable to find work in their own fields, or because they believed that being self-employed seemed preferable to working at low paying semi-skilled or unskilled jobs. Because so many of their clients chose this route, the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies contracted with Interface, a non-profit, public policy research organization, to conduct a study on the problems encountered by those who chose to operate their own businesses. If successful, the new emigre small businesses would have a significant impact not only on the Soviet emigre communities, but on community development in New York City as a whole. Small businesses were opened in areas such as Brighton Beach, Forest Hills, Flatbush, and Far Rockaway. The emigres interviewed were mainly middle-aged, from the European sections of the USSR, and included professionals and non-professionals. Their command of the English language ranged from fair to good.[54]

The interviews suggested that although they experienced significant difficulties, their perseverance and drive enabled many of them to become quite successful. However, the stubbornness and aggressiveness characteristic of the emigres who attempted to become entrepreneurs meant that they sometimes tended to rush into the enterprise with a false sense of confidence and without understanding all the risks. In some cases, they were too trusting and signed leases and agreements without completely understanding the contents; did not conduct title searches before purchasing property; did not incorporate to reduce personal liability; did not understand the importance of having insurance or licenses; were unaware of tax laws; and were unable to obtain the capital needed to finance the business or to meet unexpected expenses.[55]

The study also indicated that many emigres had derived business experience before coming to the United States by participating in the Soviet grey or black markets. The illegal nature of these operations conditioned many to function in a surreptitious manner even after they arrived here. As the author pointed out, it is impossible to judge how prevalent such practices are; the major concern is that the emigre

does not fully understand the implications of infractions of the law such as bribery, operating without a license, or non-payment of income taxes.[56]

The fact that there are so many of these enterprises throughout the city, proves that with the right type of help and the determination evidenced by the emigres, there could be a large percentage of successful businesses. The technical assistance program to address specific psychological and practical problems recommended by the Interface study should help to make these successes possible.

Another problem of adjustment to a new society that had to be faced was that of difficulties faced by teenage children and their parents as they attempt to adjust to the academic and social demands of the American high school. As one educator pointed out, Russian children are raised in an authoritarian atmosphere and are not accustomed to taking initiative for behavior at home or at school. Teachers found that these students become confused by the unstructured atmosphere and therefore need constant supervision in order to succeed at school. Added to these problems are their feelings of alienation in a new environment and the pressures placed upon them by parents who see academic achievement as the path to economic and social mobility. Occupational status is

extremely important to Soviet Jews. Many Russian Jews emigrated to the United States, not only because of their own situation, but because they felt anti-Semitism would prevent their children from attending a university or institution of learning, and they would, therefore, be unable to attain professional status in the Soviet Union. While some Soviet teenagers make the adjustment to the new culture easily, it must be recognized that others will not find the transition to be smooth.[57]

Part III. Jewish Identity and Integration into the American Jewish Community

Two wills make a group--the self-will that creates unity, and the will of others that imposes a unity where hardly any is felt. Conceivably, this will of others had an effect on Jews.

Glazer & Moynihan
Beyond the Melting Pot

For groups such as the Jews, the religious component is seemingly inseparable.

Anya Peterson Royce
Ethnic Identity

It is relevant at this point to inquire "what constitutes the American Jewish Community?" Glazer and Moynihan address this question in Beyond the Melting Pot and state:[58]

> There is a reality to the notion of an American Jewish Community though it is not a reality that can be summed up in a simple definition. Aware of all the complexities of being Jewish, of all the groupings and subgroups within that category, and of all the ways in which Jews do not act as a group, we can still speak of it as a group. ... There is also, linking all Jews, the sense of a common fate, defined ultimately by connection to a single religion. to which everyone is still attached by birth and tradition if not by action and belief.

Arrival in this country brought some of the Soviet immigrants into their first encounter with Judaism. As Rebbitzen Grunblatt of the Russian Service Center indicated to me in my interview with her, gentile children in this country know more about Jewish holidays, celebrations, and rituals than do Russian adults in the Soviet Union, who lack even familiarity with the Ten Commandments. To combat this ignorance and provide some measure of instruction at least to the children of the Russian immigrants religious schools (yeshivas) added special classes to absorb the newly arrived youngsters. Local synagogues welcomed the Russian immigrants as members of their congregations. Those seeking an Orthodox religious environment settled in communities such as Borough Park and Crown Heights in Brooklyn. Others settled in Central Queens and other areas of the city.[59]

After the Soviet Jews arrived in the United States, the costs of resettling them were borne largely by the American Jewish Community and their volunteer agencies. A motivating force, in addition to humanitarian concerns was the hope that they would develop a strong Jewish identity, that they would participate in American Jewish communal life, and that their children would become part of the American Jewish scene.[60]

Faubion Bowers, in his New York Times article points out that "after three generations of life under Communism, Soviet Jews often find 'the Jew within' extinguished. As one immigrant confided to him, "The only thing Jewish about me is my name and my nose." Most of the Jewish arrivals have never heard a shofer or sat at a seder, partly because they weren't allowed and partly because they didn't want to. Many of the immigrants, he found, having been psychologically, if not physically segregated, simply want to be absorbed into the American melting pot--as, they imagine, everyone else here has been.[61]

Because of the concern by American Jews that Judaism was destroyed or, at least suppressed, in the Soviet Union and that Soviet Jewish immigrants did not identify as Jews, the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies conducted a study of Jewish identification and affiliation of

Soviet Jewish immigrants in New York City. The goal of the study was to develop a comprehensive strategy to encourage Jewish identification among the almost 50,000 Soviet immigrants residing in New York. As stated in the report, "With the majority of the immigrants in the United States for five or more years, the time is now ripe to assess the situation, develop an overall strategy, and implement activities which will result in strong Jewish involvement among Soviet immigrants." Beyond this general concern there were specific fears as evidenced by reports of missionary activities by evangelical groups among Soviet Jews. Because of their weak Jewish identities, it was feared that the Russian Jewish population might be particularly vulnerable to the proselytizing groups.[62]

Simcha Goldberg of the Soviet Jewish Resettlement Program of the Council of Jewish Federations reminds us that "the cut-off date from the possibility of cultural Jewishness in the Soviet Union may be said to be not 60, but less than 30 years ago, a relatively short time ago. The wounds are still quick. Since then, the anti-Jewish campaigns, as most of here know, have been waged so fiercely and with such constancy that, to a considerable extent, Jewish self-expression, except in selected geographical areas, was reduced to the fact of having

Yevrei stamped on the internal passport of those born to Jewish parents."[63]

He also points out that the entire experience of emigration and resettlement has to awaken an awareness of Jewish identity, as it was only by asserting his Jewishness that the Soviet Jew could acquire the needed exit visa from the Soviet government, from the time of arrival in Vienna, assistance is offered because he is a Jew and this help comes largely from the Jewish community. Thus Jewishness has become an asset and the refugee, whatever his previous attitudes, has become more open to things Jewish. However, Mr. Goldberg indicates, "Newcomers identify with the Jewish community, but not in a religious sense, which is no doubt a reflection of the general tenor of American Jewish life."[64]

The Lubavitch or Chabad sect has been the most successful in attracting the Soviet Jews. They have instituted Russian programs in nearly all large cities encompassing drop-in centers, day-schools, summer camps, lending libraries, ESL, and gifts of necessary Jewish ritual items. Their success is attributed to several factors: They have an aggressive outreach program; as Hassidim, and originally from Russia, their observances make the emigres feel at home; therefore, they are good Jewish role models.

As one observer remarked, "the role model presented by most indigenous United States Jews does not bode well for a religiously-based Jewish identity for Soviet Jews and an identity based on culture requires the development of a foundation for such."[65]

The primary conclusion which emerged from the 1985 Federation Report is that Soviet Jewish immigrants strongly and positively identify as Jews and that differences between them and American Jews stem mainly from "language differences, the socio-political environment of the Soviet Union, and certain post-migration related factors." The survey indicated, too, that although Jewish rites of passage are important in the lives of the Soviet Jews, because they are not accustomed to making Jewishness public, affiliation in Jewish organizations generally has been negligible. However, 25% of those interviewed for the survey had joined synagogues and 35% belonged to community centers. Almost 100%, however, felt that having their children educated about Jewish history and culture is important and there is a strong preference that their children marry other Jews. Over one-third indicated that their children attend a Jewish day school, which is supported by Board of Jewish Education statistics, showing

that 5,000 recently arrived Soviet Jewish immigrant children have attended day schools over the past ten years. Enrollment in supplementary schools is low, paralleling the pattern for American Jews in New York City. Families with children in day schools tended to participate in Jewish activities to a greater extent than those who did not attend day school.[66]

Based on the findings in their study, Federation personnel have made recommendations to enhance the Jewish identity and affiliation of the Soviet Jewish immigrants. They emphasized the need for education about the American Jewish Community generally, how it fits into a pluralistic multi-ethnic society, and how it serves the Jewish people. In addition, there is a need to institute programs to instill "Jewish pride" in the Soviet Jews in order to counteract the negative associations they may have acquired regarding their Jewish identity. The reporters also saw a need to improve American Jewish and Soviet Jewish relations so that existing problems may be resolved more readily. These efforts should be ongoing and should involve participation by the Soviet Jewish immigrants in forums where grievances, expectations, and disappointments could be discussed with staff experienced in group dynamics and group relations.[67]

CONCLUSION

In 1981 the Soviet Resettlement Program of the Council of Jewish Federations sponsored a survey in fourteen cities in the United States of 900 Soviet Jewish refugees to determine the extent of their economic adjustment as well as the quality and strength of their Jewish identities. It was learned that taken as a whole the Soviet immigrants are making a good adjustment and are already contributing rather than taking from the Jewish community. According to the survey, if they had to do it over again, 86% would emigrate to the United States; 6% would go to Israel, and one per cent would go elsewhere, but they are not sure where; 5% would remain in the Soviet Union.[68]

A report by NYANA indicates that despite all their difficulties the Russian Jews who arrived in the United States showed an extraordinary degree of achievement in a short period of time. Like the generation before them, "they are a rich source of potential spiritual and cultural contributions to American Jewish life."[69]

The general consensus of Jewish communal workers throughout the country who have been assisting the Soviet Jews in their efforts to build new lives is that while the immigrants still have tremendous problems

to surmount, teamwork on the part of all concerned, including the emigres themselves, will assure ultimate success. Public and private agencies have expended an unprecedented amount of financial and human resources to aid new arrivals from around the world. During the "third wave" of emigration from the Soviet Union, Americans have opened their doors and hearts to their fellow Jews, many of whom still bear the scars of the Holocaust. Kinship and empathy have resulted in an outpouring of help from the American Jewish Community reminiscent of the assistance and support given to the State of Israel during times of crisis.

As recommended in the Federation Report, there must be an ongoing effort to assist the Russians, not only to become "Americanized," but also "Judaized," to strengthen their Jewish identity and affiliation by becoming participating members of the American Jewish Community.

APPENDIX

Table 1

Jews in the USSR by Republic and indices of assimilation

Table 2

Republic of Origin of HIAS-assisted arrivals in the U. S. 1971-75

Table 3

Motivation for Jewish Emigration from the USSR in the 1970s

Table 4

Problems of Adjustment

Table 1

THE SOVIET-JEWISH ANOMALY

Jews in the USSR by republic and indices of assimilation

Index		Republic	% of total Jew. pop.
I. Educational level			
(a) Number of Jews in higher educational institutions per 1,000 Jews in 1959 census, 1960-1			
(i)	41-54	RSFSR, Armenia	38.6
(ii)	27-40	Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tadzhikistan, Kirgizia	6.3
(iii)	13-26	Ukraine, Belorussia, Moldavia, Azerbaidzhan, Georgia, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Turkmenia	55.0
(b) Number of Jews with some higher education per 1,000 Jews over 9 years old in 1970 census, 1970			
(i)	320-399	RSFSR	37.6
(ii)	240-319	Latvia	1.7
(iii)	160-239	Ukraine, Belorussia, Moldavia	47.6
II. Use of Jewish language*			
(a) % declaring Jew. lang. as mother or second tongue, 1970			
(i)	20.3-34.5	RSFSR, Ukraine, Belorussia, Kazakhstan, Tadzhikistan, Kirgizia, Estonia, Armenia	83.2

continued

SOVIET-JEWISH EMIGRATION AND SOVIET NATIONALITY POLICY

continued

Index	Republic	% of total Jew. pop.
II. Use of Jewish language		
(ii) 34.6-48.8	Uzbekistan, Azerbaidzhan, Turkmenia	6.9
(iii) 48.9-63.1	Moldavia, Lithuania, Latvia	7.4
III. Exogamy		
(a) Min. % of married Jew. men with non-Jew. wives, 1959		
(i) 9.6-16.6	RSFSR	38.6
(ii) 2.5-9.5	Ukraine, Belorussia, Moldavia	47.9
(b) % of marriages with at least one Jew. spouse in which one spouse was non-Jew., 1960-8		
(i) about 50	RSFSR, Ukraine, Belorussia, Estonia, Latvia	82.5
(ii) about 30	Moldavia, Uzbekistan	12.0

Sources: Adapted from Altshuler, 1979a: pp. 38, 80, 157, 162, 217; Nove and Newth in Kochan, 1978: p. 150.

Note:
*Georgian Jews have no unique Jewish language and have consequently been omitted from this portion of the table.

Table 2.4 Jews in the USSR by republic and summary index of assimilation

Index	Republic	% of total Jew. pop.
1.0-1.6	RSFSR, Kazakhstan, Tadzhikistan, Kirgizia, Estonia, Armenia	40.2
1.7-2.3	Ukraine, Belorussia, Latvia, Uzbekistan	49.5
2.4-3.1	Moldavia, Georgia, Azerbaidzhan, Turkmenia, Lithuania	10.4

Source: Calculated from Table 2.3.

Table 2

REPUBLIC OF ORIGIN OF HIAS-ASSISTED USSR ARRIVALS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1971–1975

Republic	*Jewish Population (rounded) 1970 USSR Census*[a]	*Number of Arrivals*					
		1971	*1972*	*1973*	*1974*	*1975*	*Total*
Armenian SSR	1,100	–	–	–	5	4	9
Azerbaidzhan SSR	41,300	–	–	–	12	9	21
Byelorussian SSR	148,000	6	15	59	84	123	287
Estonian SSR	5,300	–	–	–	–	3	3
Georgian SSR	55,400	4	2	18	118	126	268
Kazakhstan SSR	27,700	–	–	–	–	–	–
Kirgizhian SSR	7,700	–	–	–	–	9	9
Latvian SSR	36,700	10	23	78	96	140	347
Lithuanian SSR	23,600	1	10	9	28	55	103
Moldavian SSR	98,100	10	31	77	148	200	466
Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic	808,000	14	58	388	891	1,078[b]	2,429
Tadzhikistan SSR	14,600	–	–	1	–	5	6
Turkmenistan SSR	3,500	–	–	–	–	6	6
Ukrainian SSR	777,000	166	306	797	2,067	2,815[c]	6,151
Uzbekistan SSR	103,000	1	8	19	15	58	101
Not Listed	–	2	–	3	26	619	650
Total	2,151,000	214	453	1,449	3,490	5,250	10,856

[a] See AJYB, 1971 [Vol. 72], pp. 403–04 for interpretation.

[b] Includes 686 from Moscow (64 per cent of RSFSR arrivals in 1975).
340 from Leningrad (32 per cent of RSFSR arrivals in 1975).

[c] Includes 1,373 from Odessa (constituting 49 per cent of Ukrainian arrivals and 26 per cent of total arrivals in 1975). Includes 751 from Kiev (27 per cent of Ukrainian arrivals in 1975). The 3,150 migrants from the four cities noted constituted 60 per cent of the total arrivals in 1975.

persons (Table 4) indicates that 3,071 (28 per cent) were age 20 and under; 5,866 (54 per cent)—the predominant number—were between the ages 21 and 50; and 1,887 persons (17 per cent) were 51 years and older.

Of the total, 5,593 (52 per cent) were males and 5,263 (48 per cent) females.[1] In the age range from one month to 20 years, primarily composed of children and students, there were 1,687 (30 per cent) males and 1,384 (26 per cent) females.

[1] Of the 2,151,000 Jews in the 1970 census, 988,000 (45.9 per cent) were males and 1,162,700 (54.1 per cent) were females.

Table 3

Motivation for Jewish Emigration from the USSR in the 1970s (in percentages)

	American Surveys				Israeli Surveys		
Motivation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Rejection of the USSR							
Antisemitism	19.7	76.0		28.6	40.0	39.0	39.0
Dissatisfaction with the regime	18.2		50.0			12.0	8.0
Discrimination in:							
education and culture	5.5	6.8		14.9	33.5		
work			42.0		9.8		
religion	6.1	2.1					
The attractiveness of foreign countries							
Desire to live in one's own homeland				14.2	60.8	3.0	23.0
Unification of families (relatives abroad)	30.5		51.0			15.0	16.0
Economic improvement	6.8					17.0	6.0
Children's future	7.6						

American Surveys
1. Detroit
2. Minneapolis/St. Paul
3. US Congress
4. Zionist activities

Israeli Surveys
5. General (*olpenim*)
6. Ministry of Absorption (Leshem) survey – *yoshrim*
7. Ministry of Absorption (Leshem) survey – *olim*

Table 4

Percentage Reporting Problems in Adjustment

Problem	Major Problem	Minor Problem	No Problem	No Answer
Finding a good job	74	11	15	
Making new friends	28	27	44	1
Learning English	75	15	10	
Feeling outside Jewish community	7	20	72	1
Earning enough money for family	47	27	25	1
Giving a good education to your children	33	12	50	5
Indifference of Americans	10	21	68	1
Finding a good place to live	20	19	61	
Being separated from family	62	19	19	
Feeling like an outsider	16	21	63	

The Soviet immigrants rightly perceive knowledge of the English language as an important and necessary skill in their socioeconomic adjustment and mobility. At the time of the survey, 50 percent were attending special English classes. Respondents were asked to rate their abilities in reading, writing, and speaking English immediately after they arrived in the United States and again at the time of the survey. They were asked to report their ability on a five-point scale, with 1 meaning no fluency or knowledge in the language and 5 total fluency. Reading fluency on this scale at time of arrival was 1.8 and 3.1 at the time of the survey; writing fluency was 1.7 at time of arrival and 2.7 at time of survey; and speaking fluency at time of arrival was 1.6 and 3.1 at time of survey. Asked to judge their ability to read, write, and speak Russian, their ratings were 4.97, 4.95, and 4.96, respectively.

By their own evaluations, the Soviet immigrants made considerable strides since arrival. Comparing the scores by age, at both points in time respondents over 50 did not rate themselves as highly as did the younger people.

	Fluency at time of arrival				*Fluency at time of survey*			
	30	*30–39*	*40–49*	*50*	*30*	*30–39*	*40–49*	*50*
Reading	2.3	1.9	1.9	1.4	3.5	2.3	3.1	2.4
Writing	2.0	1.7	1.7	1.3	2.9	2.8	2.8	2.1
Speaking	1.9	1.7	1.7	1.3	3.4	3.1	3.2	2.6

NOTES

[1]Leon D. Fisher, "Initial Experiences in the Resettlement of Soviet Jews in the United States." Journal of Jewish Communal Service, 51 (Spring 1975), 267-69.

[2]Zvi Gitelman, "Soviet Jews in the U.S.," Soviet Jewish Affairs, 12 (May 1982), 3.

[3]"Why They Left: A Survey of Jewish Emigrants," in American Jewish Yearbook, 1977, pp. 157-8.

[4]Victor Zaslavsky and Robert J. Brym. Soviet-Jewish Emigration and Soviet National Policy (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), p. 19.

[5]Ibid, p. 21.

[6]Gaynor I. Jacobson, "Spotlight on Soviet Jewry; Absorption in the USA--Challenge and Prospect," Journal of Jewish Communal Service, 52 (Winter 1975), 190-194.

[7]Hedrick Smith, The Russians (New York: Ballantine Books, 1976), p. 27.

[8]Ibid, pp. 403-5.

[9]Thomas Kessner and Betty Boyd Caroli, Today's Immigrants, Their Stories: A New Look at the Newest Americans (New York: Oxford U. P., 1981), p. 165.

[10]Faubion Bowers, "Only- and Lonely- in America," New York Times, September 26, 1976, 24-28.

[11]Smith, p. 670.

[12]Ibid, p. 641.

[13]Zaslavsky and Brym, p. 12.

[14]Lester Samuel Eckman, Soviet Policy Towards Jews and Israel (New York: Shengold Publishers, Inc., 1974), pp. 14-15.

[15]Smith, p. 641.

[16]Ralph T. Fisher, Jr., "Birobidzhan," The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History, vol. 4 (1977), 173.

[17]Benjamin Pinkus, The Soviet Government & the Jews, 1948-1967: A Documented Study (New York: Cambridge U. P., 1948), p. 375.

[18]Pinkus, pp. 372-73.

[19]William Mandel, "Rebuilding the Moscow Yiddish Musical Theater," Jewish Currents, 37 (December 1983), 17.

[20]Benjamin Pinkus, "National Identity and Emigration Patterns Among Soviet Jewry," Soviet Jewish Affairs, 15(3) (November 1985), 15.

[21]Joshua Rothenberg, "Jewish Religion in the Soviet Union." In The Jews in Soviet Russia since 1917. (New York: Oxford U. P., 1972), p. 177.

[22]Ibid, p. 182.

[23]Robert J. Brym, "Soviet Emigration Policy: Internal Determinants: The Changing Rate of Jewish Emigration from the USSR: Some Lessons from the 1970s." Soviet Jewish Affairs, 15(2) (May 1985), 26.

[24]Ibid, 30.

[25]Pinkus, 17.

[26]Ibid, 17.

[27]Ibid, passim.

[28]Kessner, p. 167.

[29]Pinkus, 24.

[30]Joseph Edelman, "Soviet Jews in the United States: A Profile." In American Jewish Yearbook 1977, 77, 158.

[31]Ibid, 164.

[32]Zaslavsky and Brym, p. 128.

[33]Edelman, 161.

[34]Zvi Nezer, "Jewish Emigration from the USSR in 1981-82," Soviet Jewish Affairs, 12(3) (November 1982), 17.

[35]Edelman, 165.

[36]Zvi Gitelman, "Soviet Immigrants and American Absorption Efforts: A Case Study in Detroit," Journal of Jewish Communal Service, 55(1) (September 1978), 73.

[37]Ibid, 72-3.

[38]Gaynor I. Jacobson, "A Symposium on the Soviet Immigrant," Journal of Jewish Communal Service, 56(1) (Fall 1979), 50-51.

[39]Julia Taft, et al. Refugee Resettlement in the United States: Time for a New Focus (Washington, D.C.: New TransCentury Foundation, 1979), p. 33.

[40]Edelman, 167.

[41]Ibid, 167.

[42]NYANA News (Fall 1984).

[43]NYANA News (Winter 1985-86).

[44]NYANA News (Spring 1984).

[45]Gitelman (September 1978), p. 74-75.

[46]Ibid, p. 80.

[47]Nina Dorf, "The Impact of Soviet Jewish Culture on the Problem-Solving Process," Journal of Jewish Communal Service, 56(1) (Fall 1979), 53.

[48]Lenore Parker, "Soviet Emigres Bewildered by Contrasting Lifestyles," Foundation News (September/October 1976), 43.

[49]Jacobson (Winter 1975), 193.

[50]Nora Levin, "Soviet Jewish Immigrants in Philadelphia, 1972-82," Soviet Jewish Affairs, 14(3) (November 1984), 20-21.

[51]NYANA News (Winter 1985-86).

[52]Parker, 40-41.

[53]Marilyn Rueschemeyer, "Painters and Sculptors." In New Lives, ed. Rita J. Simon (Lexington, MA.: D.C. Heath and Co., 1985), p. 172-74.

[54]Nancy Lubin, "Small Business Owners." In New Lives, p. 154-55.

[55]Ibid, 158.

[56]Ibid, 160.

[57]Carole T. West, "Soviet Immigration: The Adolescent Experience," Journal of Jewish Communal Service, 55(4) (Summer 1979), 382-85.

[58]Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Beyond the Melting Pot (Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press, 1970), 142-43.

[59]Kessner, p. 171.

[60]Simon, p. 31.

[61]Bowers, pp. 34, 37.

[62]Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, "Jewish Identification and Affiliation of Soviet Jewish Immigrants in New York City (June 1985), 1.

[63]Simcha R. Goldberg, "Jewish Acculturation and the Soviet Immigrant," Journal of Jewish Communal Service, 57(2) (1980), 155.

[64]Ibid, 156.

[65]Ibid, 161.

[66]Federation, 6, 7.

[67]Ibid, 11, 12.

[68]Simon, p. 31.

[69]Edelman, 181.

Appendix

Table 1. Brym, p. 23.
Table 2. Edelman, 165.
Table 3. Pinkus, SJA, 16.
Table 4. Simon, p. 29.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abramsky, C. "The Biro-Bidzhan Project, 1927-1959." In Jews in Soviet Russia. Edited by Lionel Kochan. New York: Oxford University Press, 1972.

Alexander, Z. "Jewish Emigration from the USSR in 1980." Soviet Jewish Affairs, 11 (May 1981), 3-21.

Bowers, Faubion. "Only- and lonely- in America." New York Times, September 26, 1976, pp. 24-28; 32, 34-37.

Brym, Robert J. "The Changing Rate of Jewish Emigration from the USSR." Soviet Jewish Affairs, 15 (May 1985), 23-25.

Dorf, Nina. "The Impact of Soviet Jewish Culture on the Problem-Solving Process," Journal of Jewish Communal Service, 56(1) (Fall 1979), 52-54.

Dublin, Richard A. "Some Observations on Resettling Soviet Jews." Journal of Jewish Communal Service, 53 (March 1977), 278-81.

Eckman, Lester Samuel. Soviet Policy Towards Jews and Israel. New York: Shengold Publishers, Inc., 1974.

Edelman, Joseph. "Soviet Jews in the United States: A Profile." American Jewish Year Book 1977, 77, 157-181.

Federation of Jewish Philanthropies. "Jewish Identification and Affiliation of Soviet Jewish Immigrants in New York City." New York: American Jewish Committee, June 1985.

Feldman, William. "Social Absorption of Soviet Immigrants: Integration or Isolation." Journal of Jewish Communal Service, 54 (September 1977), 62-68.

Fisher, Leon D. "Initial Experiences in the Resettlement of Soviet Jews in the U.S." Journal of Jewish Communal Service, 51 (Spring 1975), 267-69.

Gitelman, Zvi. "Soviet Immigrants and American Absorption Efforts: A Case Study in Detroit." Journal of Jewish Communal Service, 55 (September 1978), 72-82.

_____. "Soviet Immigrant Resettlement in the United States." Soviet Jewish Affairs, 12 (May 1982), 3-18.

Glazer, Nathan and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Beyond the Melting Pot. Cambridge, Ma.: M.I.T. Press, 1970.

Goldberg, Simcha R. "Jewish Acculturation and the Soviet Immigrant." Journal of Jewish Communal Service, 57(2) (1980), 154-163.

Haines, David W., Editor. Refugees in the United States. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985.

Hawks, Irene Kaminsky. "The New Immigrant: A Study of the Vocational Adjustment of Soviet Jews." Journal of Jewish Communal Service, 54 (December 1977), 161-65.

Jacobson, Gaynor I. "Spotlight on Soviet Jewry; Absorption in the USA--Challenge and Prospect." Journal of Jewish Communal Service, 52 (Winter 1975), 190-94.

_____. "A Symposium on the Soviet Immigrant." Journal of Jewish Communal Service, 56(1) (Fall 1979), 50-51.

"Jews and Jewish Identity in the Soviet Union." Jewish Currents, 38 (December 1984), 12-14.

Kessner, Thomas and Betty Boyd Caroli. Today's Immigrants, Their Stories: A New Look at the Newest Americans. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.

Korey, William. "The Future of Soviet Jewry: Emigration and Assimilation." Foreign Affairs, 58 (Fall 1979), 67-81.

Levin, Nora. "Soviet Jewish Immigrants in Philadelphia, 1972-82." Soviet Jewish Affairs, 14 (November 1984), 15-29.

Mandel, William. "Rebuilding the Moscow Yiddish Musical Theater." Jewish Currents, 37 (December 1983), 15-20.

Nezer, Zvi. "Jewish Emigration from the USSR in 1981-82." Soviet Jewish Affairs, 12 (November 1982), 3-17.

NYANA News. (Spring 1984) (Fall 1984) (Winter 1985-86)

Parker, Lenore. "Soviet Emigres Bewildered by Contrasting Lifestyles." Foundation News, 17 (September/October 1976), 38-43.

Pinkus, Benjamin. The Soviet Government & the Jews, 1948-1967: A Documented Study. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

Pinkus, Benjamin. "National Identity and Emigration Patterns of Soviet Jewry." Soviet Jewish Affairs, 15 (November 1985), 3-28.

Rothenberg, Joshua. "Jewish Religion in the Soviet Union." In The Jews in Soviet Russia since 1917. New York: Oxford University Press, 1972.

Scherer, John L. "A Note on Soviet Jewish Emigration, 1971-84." Soviet Jewish Affairs, 15 (May 1985), 37-44.

Simon, Rita J., ed. New Lives: The Adjustment of Soviet Jewish Immigrants in the United States and Israel. Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Co., 1985.

Smith, Hedrick. The Russians. New York: Ballatine Books, 1976.

Taft, Ethel. "The Absorption of Soviet Jewish Immigrants: Their Impact on Jewish Communal Institutions." Journal of Jewish Communal Service, 54 (December 1977), 166-171.

Taft, Julia Vadala, David S. North and David A. Ford. Refugee Resettlement in the United States: Time for a New Focus. Washington, D.C.: New TransCentury Foundation, 1979.

West, Carole T. "Soviet Integration: The Adolescent Experience." Journal of Jewish Communal Service, 55 (Summer 1979), 382-385.

Zaslavsky, Victor and Robert J. Brym. Soviet-Jewish Emigration. New York: St. Martins Press, 1983.

Resettlement and Assimilation of
Soviet Jewish Emigres into the
American Jewish Community

Edith Dressler

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Liberal Studies in the Graduate Division of Queens College, the City University of New York. May 30, 1986.

Approved by: R E Bird

Date: May 15, 1986

Approved by: Norton Rinè
Director, MALS
May 29 1986